



ECOSOUM

ACTIVITY REPORT



2018-2019

INTRODUCTION

Ecosoum is a Mongolian association for rural development based on ecological and solidarity values. Founded in Khishig-Undur, Mongolia, the organization aims to empower its inhabitants so they can make their soum a model of local autonomous sustainable development that can inspire the whole country.

This report summarizes the main activities conducted by Ecosoum to pursue this objective between October 3, 2018 (registration date of the association) and December 31, 2019.

Although many activities are crosscutting, the report is subdivided by field of action for more clarity on the progress of different projects.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

ECOSOUM'S OBJECTIVE IS TO SET UP AN EFFICIENT AND SUSTAINABLE WASTE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM, BY PROMOTING WASTE SORTING AND RECYCLING, AIMING AT ZERO ULTIMATE WASTE ON THE SCALE OF THE SOUM.

At the request of the population and local authorities, improvement of waste management in Khishig-Undur has been the main project on which Ecosoum has focused since the creation of the association. Due to lack of sufficient funding, the construction of the necessary medium- and long-term infrastructure for optimal and sustainable waste management could not be started in 2019. But many other equally necessary actions were carried out during the year.

AWARENESS-RAISING OF THE POPULATION AND LOCAL INSTITUTIONS

From the beginning of the project, our first activities were focused on raising the awareness of the population and staff of local institutions (administration, school, kindergarten and hospital). This work has been ongoing throughout the year through multiple formal meetings and countless informal discussions.

Various information and awareness-raising materials have been created to support this sharing of knowledge. In particular, we have printed flyers and posters encouraging the sorting of waste, which we have displayed and distributed in public spaces and many small shops. We have also created a dedicated page on the Ecosoum's website (www.ecosoum.org/hog), where we explain in detail why good waste management is essential to reduce risks to health and the environment, how to simply sort waste, and where to dispose it. The site includes a brief video summarizing all this information, in order to reach the widest possible audience within the soum. This video was screened to all students in their classrooms, as well as a documentary film (*Trashed*) on the subject, translated by us into Mongolian.



ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Our awareness-raising and advocacy work with the sum authorities - to encourage them to take more action towards better waste management - has gradually evolved into true collaboration as mutual trust was built up. Ecosoum is now considered by the local authorities as the sum's key actor for waste management.

Our association is now at the forefront in defining the action strategies of the sum's administration and is being delegated more and more prerogatives to implement effective waste management in the village. A first official contract was signed at the end of the year for the purchase of a glass crusher and for the establishment of a waste sorting system within the sum's institutions.



WASTE COLLECTION AND CLEANING OF IMPACTED AREAS

Eventually, Ecosoum wants to clean and restore all areas impacted by waste, including by greatly reducing the soum's current open dumpsite. In line with our strategy of action, waste collection campaigns will grow in the years to come, but we have already started this work during the past summer. Thanks to the mobilization of many members of the association, especially youngsters, we have also managed to make the 2019 edition of Khishig-Undur's Naadam the cleanest in the soum's recent history.



WASTE SORTING

Once sufficient funds have been gathered, we plan to develop a real waste sorting and disposal center on the outskirts of the village, both convenient for users and environmentally friendly. In the meantime, we have set up a small temporary sorting center in a garage, so that the first inhabitants who started sorting their waste are not discouraged by the lack of collection facilities. Several households are already disposing their recyclable waste in the dedicated area.



WASTE RECYCLING

In order to start recycling plastic waste, we have built – with the help of two foreign engineer students – two machines to crush the plastic and then melt it in a mold. By this method, after several tests, we were able to recycle approximately one hundred single-use plastic bowls (used during Naadam) to manufacture a solid stool. This first prototype will be followed by other items as the population will bring us more and more plastic waste.





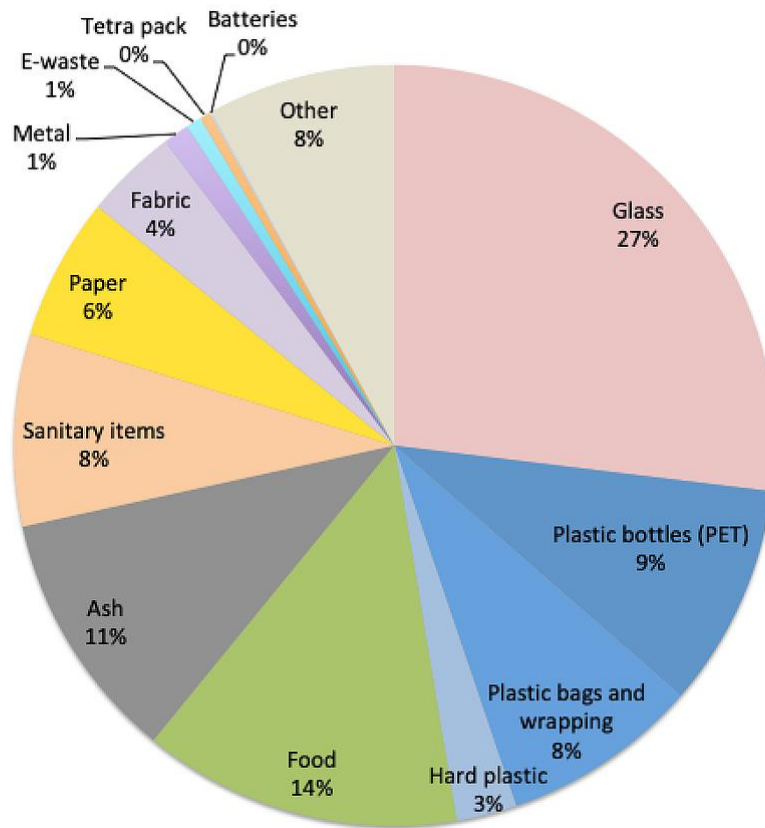
REPLACEMENT OF SINGLE-USE ITEMS BY REUSABLE ONES

Since reducing the production of waste is actually much better than just recycling it, Ecosoum also strives to promote a transition from single-use disposable items to reusable ones. The first step taken by the association was to replace the single-use plastic shoe-covers which were used in the hospital and kindergarten to avoid dirtying buildings by reusable ones made out of fabric. The next step will be to replace single-use baby diapers with more eco-friendly washable models.



HOUSEHOLD WASTE COMPOSITION STUDY

In order to fill the huge lack of data regarding the composition of household waste not only in Khishig-Undur but throughout all rural Mongolia, we conducted a summer survey of 36 families (10% of households in the village). We showed that the sedentary households in Khishig-Undur produce an average of 3.7 kg of waste per week, almost half (by weight) of it being glass (27%) or plastic (20%). A second study, carried out in winter, will help confirming these results and highlight any differences between summer and winter waste (particularly with regard to the volume of ash produced in the heating stoves).

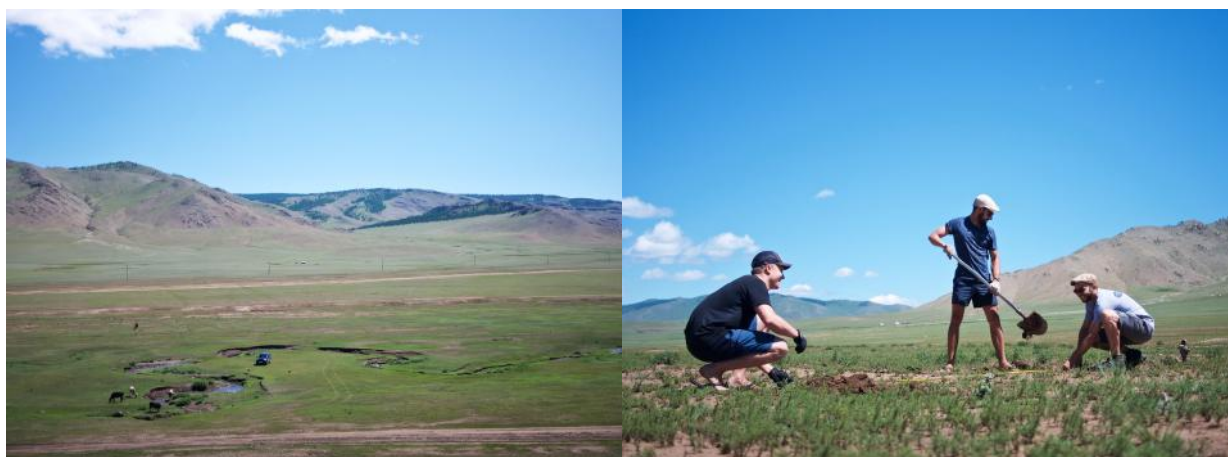


AGRO-ECOLOGY AND FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

ECOSOUM'S OBJECTIVE IS TO DEVELOP A LOCAL, SUSTAINABLE AND ECOLOGICAL AGRICULTURE CAPABLE OF PROVIDING VEGETABLES YEAR-ROUND TO THE SOUM'S POPULATION IN ORDER TO ENSURE ITS FOOD SOVEREIGNTY.

The first step consisted in meeting and discussing with all households engaged in agricultural activities within the soum, to better identify local needs and issues. However, since professional agriculture is actually very limited in Khishig-Undur, it appeared that the best way to achieve food sovereignty was to start an associative farm, in order not only to produce vegetables for local consumption, but also and above all to lead by example and encourage other households to start professional farming - while supporting existing farmers.

A 2 hectares field was granted to Ecosoum by the local administration so that we could establish our farm. Wire fences were purchased and more than 200 holes were dug for the poles. We initially planned to start the first crops during spring of 2019, but a series of setbacks finally forced us to postpone the beginning of our agricultural project until next year.



RENEWABLE ENERGIES AND ECO-CONSTRUCTION

ECOSOUM'S OBJECTIVE IS TO LOCALLY PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT OF SOLAR AND WIND ENERGIES AND CONSTRUCTION OF MORE EFFICIENT, SUSTAINABLE, AND ECOLOGICAL BUILDINGS.

The main action concerning the development of renewable energies was to be the construction of a Piggott wind turbine. This turbine was supposed to supply electricity to Ecosoum's future farm well pump, which is located in an area with no connection to the electricity grid. Contacts were made with specialized technical partners and a French engineer came during the summer to supervise the construction of this wind turbine. However, due to lack of funding, construction had to be postponed until next year.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AWARENESS-RAISING

ECOSOUM'S OBJECTIVE IS TO RAISE AWARENESS AMONG THE POPULATION, ESPECIALLY THE YOUTH, ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC ISSUES TO ENCOURAGE THEIR PARTICIPATION IN SOLVING THESE PROBLEMS.

Awareness-raising activities were conducted with a crosscutting approach as part of our "waste management" project. No specific project to raise awareness on sustainable development has yet been implemented but ongoing substantive work is being carried out at school, notably through the Eco-Club run by the physics teacher (who is a member of Ecosoum). Our "UB members" (a group of young people from Khishig-Undur who moved to Ulaanbaatar for study or work) also came to the school and soum's administration to discuss various aspects of sustainable development.

SUSTAINABLE LIVESTOCK BREEDING

ECOSOUM'S OBJECTIVE IS TO FIGHT OVERGRAZING, DESERTIFICATION AND IMPACT OF DZUDS THROUGH A COLLECTIVE STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVESTOCK AND PASTURE MANAGEMENT, AS WELL AS BETTER LIVESTOCK PRODUCTS VALUE.

Due to lack of time and the defection of a potential partner, this project has not started yet.